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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1818
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001021

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NEA FOR FO, IPA; NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: UBAYDIYA MAYOR EAGER TO DELIVER PROJECTS TO
CONSTITUENTS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. A Fatah-controlled slate took control of Ubaydiya's municipal council on May 21 after the elected Hamas led-council resigned and the PA Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) approved a new council. Mayor Sulayman Abdullah and the new council requested USG development and program assistance to the village. The council focused on improving dilapidated local schools to handle area's accelerating "youth bulge." END SUMMARY.

Local Political Winds Shift:
Hamas Is Out, Fatah Is In

¶2. (SBU) After Ubaydiya's (east of Bethlehem, population 13,000) elected Hamas-led municipal council resigned, PA MoLG Minister Ziyad al-Bandak approved an all-Fatah council on May 21. The eleven members of the council were selected following internal deliberations among the village's five major families (each nominating two representatives) plus a tie-breaker, with MoLG confirmation of the results. Two of the eleven council members are women.

¶3. (C) On June 12, ConGen POL/AIDoffs met with newly-appointed mayor Sulayman Abdullah (also the local Fatah head, finishing first in local internal elections) and new council members in Ubaydiya. Yusif Abu Lawi, a civil engineer working for the council, said Hamas' victory in previous local elections (held in 2005) was a "punishment for Fatah" for perceived corruption. He said Hamas' failure to deliver on infrastructure projects during its three-year tenure caused discontent among locals. Mayor Abdullah added that Hamas' victory was not an indication of support for Hamas but reflected local fractures within Fatah at the time of the elections. Abdullah noted that 26 candidates had stood for election from Fatah, splitting the vote, whereas only seven Hamas candidates were on the ballot.

Assistance Requested for Education Infrastructure

¶4. (U) Mayor Abdullah requested immediate USG assistance to address the village's schools infrastructure shortcomings. POL/AIDoffs were shown images of cracked ceiling supports, open-air outhouses, and makeshift schoolhouses operating in rented buildings. (Note: USAID is in contact with a representative of the municipal council and studying how to respond to these problems prior to the new school year's start. There are also Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) grants under consideration to support programs for Ubaydiya's youth center, training of community leaders and assistance to the municipal council's women's committee. End note).

Barrier Complicates Life for Residents

15. (SBU) Ubaydiya council members said before completion of the nearby separation barrier, town unemployment was at 25-30 percent, with 85 percent of those with jobs commuting to work in Israel. After the barrier was built, they estimate unemployment has risen to 70 percent. Yusif Abu Lawi said access and movement is the most pressing issue for residents, noting that his travel to Ramallah for business often requires waiting an hour or more at Wadi Nar "Container" checkpoint, north of the village.

Comment

16. (C) Installation of an all-Fatah municipal council in Ubaydiya reflects the decision of key families to align themselves with Fatah and the PA in response to the Hamas council's ineffectiveness. The Ubaydiya appointments are not part of a general PA plan to replace Hamas-led local councils, but similar changes are possible in other municipal councils.
WALLES